



# CCM 2014 Testimony

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## ***PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE***

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The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

**HB 5580, "An Act Concerning The Pesticide Advisory Council, The Recommendations Of The Emergency Medical Services Primary Service Area Task Force And The Elimination Of A Municipal Mandate"**

CCM supports HB 5580.

HB 5580 is comprised of recommendations from Speaker Sharkey's MORE Commission:

### Recommendations of the EMS/PSA Task Force

CCM supports the full recommendations of the EMS/PSA Task Force as contained HB 5580.

### Background:

Currently the law provides municipalities limited input, let alone the option to choose their local emergency medical service (EMS) provider. Such prohibitive law has resulted in another state mandate on towns and cities. Municipalities have always put the needs of their residents first, and have done so through the services they provide. It is, therefore, counterproductive to not permit local officials the option to decide their EMS provider -- and the terms of contracts, particularly with any company that fails to adequately provide such essential services.

The Town of South Windsor is an example of how such a proposal could relieve municipalities from this state mandate. When the town sought an EMS provider for Advanced Life Saving (ALS) services -- they were still required to maintain their contract with their current provider -- whom only offered Basic Medical Services (BMS).

Handcuffed without any options, the Town requested that their provider adjust the contract by expanding its scope of services to meet the changing needs of South Windsor. This request to tailor services for ALS was denied -- and as a result, the town of South Windsor was forced to pay an additional \$700,000 for a stand-alone ALS service contract. South Windsor was informed by the ambulance provider that if it could perform both the BMS and ALS contracts, then it would not charge the town anything extra. The law did not allow for this change, and South Windsor is paying \$700,000 a year to upgrade the level of service to their residents.

HB 5580 would create a process for municipalities that seek the alternate provision of PSA responder responsibilities. As a result, this would provide hometowns a reasonable structure by which they can request the reassignment of their PSA. Local officials could submit a request to the state Department of Public Health (DPH) for the alternative provision of PSA responsibilities for any of the following purposes: (1) providing improved patient care; (2) delivering efficient emergency medical services; (3) allocating resources more efficiently; (4) aligning with a new emergency medical services provider better suited to meet the community's current needs; (5) regionalizing services; or (6) improving response times. The Commissioner of DPH would then review such requests and, upon approval, reassign the PSA to a new provider.

Municipalities are continually being asked to do more with less. Creating a process by which towns and cities have greater say regarding their PSA providers would increase the ability of local officials to select a provider that best fits their needs, and would encourage EMS providers to offer the best quality and cost efficient means of service.

### Pesticide Advisory Council

The Creation of a Pesticide Advisory Council would help develop a long term solution to the contentious issue regarding the use of pesticides on school and municipal grounds. The Council would provide the proper forum in which a science based discussion can take place regarding the sage and effective use of synthetic and organic pesticides.

HB 5580 would create a *balanced collaboration between municipalities and the State* to develop a comprehensive, effective and efficient policy for the management of municipal and school grounds by.

1. Utilizing the Pesticide Advisory Council, as constituted in CGS Section 22a-65(d), to (a) review all new pesticides on a continuing basis for safety and effectiveness and (b) report their findings to the Commissioner of DEEP for consideration in adopting regulations.
2. Requiring that DEEP, in consultation with the Pesticide Advisory Council, create, publish, and regularly update a set of best practices, including a review of the Massachusetts IPM monitoring website ([www.massnrc.org](http://www.massnrc.org)), for use by municipalities regarding the safe and effective use of both synthetic and organic pesticides.

It is important to note that municipal officials are second-to-none in ensuring the safety and health of children. Not only are municipal officials parents, but they have a fiduciary duty to protect and defend the public's interest.

Because of this responsibility, and the continued debate as to whom has the best and right information about these products, *CCM supports the creation of a balanced Advisory Council to thoroughly examine and vet the facts* surrounding field management and provide recommendations as to how specific synthetic and organic pesticides are reviewed and approved for use.

CCM stresses the need for the Pesticide Advisory Council to be comprised of individuals representing all facets of the issue and structured in a manner that no one side can walk away citing the results were biased. This will be a hard goal to achieve, but with careful thought and consideration, it can be accomplished. This council would remove the politics from the issue, and work to set policy and regulations based on the most current science regarding the safety and effectiveness of pesticides.

Since the passage of the ban on pesticide use on K-8 school grounds, towns and cities across the state have been faced with rapidly deteriorating fields:

- **Municipal costs have increased dramatically** as they have unsuccessfully sought an effective means to maintain these fields.
- The **increased presence of grubs** in fields has attracted rodents, which burrow through the soil creating dangerous tunnels that cave in as players run across them, **increasing the risk of player injury**.
- **Species such as crabgrass have begun to take over the soil, causing it to harden**, not respond to aeration, increasing soil density which **increases the risk of concussions**.

#### Elimination of Posting Requirements

CCM supports the intent to permit municipalities to notice the sale, lease or transfer of real property on the Internet web site of such municipality or in a publicly available weekly print publication, but would urge the Committee to enact the language contained in SB 40 *"An Act Concerning the Publication of Municipal Legal Notices in Newspapers"*.

The language in SB 40 would provide significant relief from a long standing costly and outdated mandate on towns and cities by ***modifying*** the requirement to **post the full text of all legal notices in local newspapers**. It is important to keep in mind:

- The Internet is *accessible to everyone*. All local libraries are equipped with computers at no cost to the users. Newspapers must be purchased to be read.
- Internet sites *can be accessed from anywhere in the world at any time*. Newspapers are purchased in the region they serve.
- Public notices placed on Internet sites *can remain there indefinitely*, making the information available for a greater amount of time. Notices placed in newspapers are only there for the allotted time paid for.

**No one is seeking to hamper the public's right to know**; rather towns and cities are seeking a more cost effective and efficient manner in which to provide information.

Newspapers have had a captive client in municipal government for years and have taken advantage of this mandate by occasionally charging their highest advertising rate for postings. In addition, these legal notices are used as filler throughout the paper to take up excess space – they are not placed in a coordinated manner to allow readers ease of access to the information. If the newspapers were serious in ensuring the public is adequately notified, each would have a designated section for all public notices to be listed, for the benefit of readers, along with a listing in table of contents.

Municipalities continue to make sacrifices and explore ways to be more efficient and saving money. Now is the time for the legislature to enact meaningful mandates relief for towns and cities - at no cost to the State.

CCM urges the committee to support legislation to (1) allow for publishing notice about the availability of a document in local newspapers, along with summary and clear instructions as to how to get additional information or the complete text of the public document, and (2) allow notices to be published in free, weekly newspapers.

CCM urges the Committee to support HB 5580 as a meaningful approach to the elimination and reduction of costly municipal mandates.

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If you have any questions, please contact Randy Collins, Senior Legislative Associate for CCM, at [rcollins@ccm-ct.org](mailto:rcollins@ccm-ct.org) or (860) 707-6446.